

Commemoration from a Distance

On Metamemorial Fiction

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Exploring two works of contemporary American and South African fiction, this essay meditates on memorials created at a distance from original sites of violence. These two metamemorial fictions both make concerns with comparative suffering and outsider participation an integral part of the commemorative process they address. They create an ambivalent space for the outsider to participate in the commemoration of atrocity: both by honoring the dead and, provocatively, by investing such empathetic acts with signs of fraudulence. These fictions envision new kinds of public memorials that foreground the significance of sacrilegious as well as sacral impulses to commemorate the dead.

Who owns the memory of atrocity? While the ethics and politics of representing the past have always provoked passionate debate, the question of how to commemorate human catastrophe has gained a new intensity in the age of globalization. As the twentieth century bequeaths its survivors a legacy of violence on an unprecedented scale, these conflicts and their aftermaths are more than ever shaped by forces beyond the local. Transnational actors frequently spur on political violence; peacemaking and mediation increasingly involve the international community; and media representations of atrocity disseminate ever more rapidly in ways that invite comparison among catastrophes from different places. As these diverse connections grow in strength and number, they invite us to inquire what role there may be for those concerned with atrocity, but not directly affected by it, to shape its legacy. In short, what does it mean to memorialize violence across borders?

This essay seeks to explore the implications of this question in fiction written in English in the twenty-first century. For many seeking to address human rights abuses, storytelling is widely considered an important part of this work. “When faced with genocidal occurrences and when unable to resist them, we are not altogether powerless—we can tell a story about them,” Magdalena Zolkos argues.¹ Though atrocity is frequently represented through the language of the unspeakable, the power of what is and can be spoken—especially through survivor testimonials, witness literature or imaginative writing—continues to play a compelling role in the aftermath of violence. The impact of such storytelling is often understood through the lens of trauma theory, in which narration provides an important therapeutic undertaking for individuals, or those close to them, who have been intimately affected by violence. This understanding has garnered widespread acceptance as a response to atrocity, informing many institutional attempts to treat survivors of violence. In the United States, for example, the National Endowment for the Arts has sponsored programs to encourage military veterans and their families to write about their experiences of war in Iraq and Afghanistan.² These conceptions of the memorial value of writing rely heavily on individual proximity to trauma, assuming an intimate relationship between the experience of catastrophe, the representation of such catastrophe and the supportive witnessing of an anticipated audience.

Yet, of course, not all efforts to represent atrocity arise from the crucible of personal experience.³ In this essay, I seek to examine a very specific kind of fiction that self-consciously meditates on what it means to commemorate violence from a distance. These writings belong to an emerging genre, one I call *metamemorial fiction*, that includes works as diverse as *Free Enterprise* (1994), by the American-Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff; *Memorial* (2000) by the Australian writer Gary Crew and illustrator Shaun Tan; *Snapshots* (2002) by the Israeli writer Michal Govrin; and *Memorial* (2006) by the American writer Bruce Wagner. The fictions I consider here complement the work of trauma theory and its investment in autobiographical experience as they investigate the intellectual and ethical stakes of memorials created by outsiders. Turning to two very different works of fiction—one from the United States, the other from South Africa—I explore their shared concern with the globalization of memorial practices. These works both raise the problem of the omnibus or sequenced memorial, in

which different atrocities are presented in comparison with one another; furthermore, they both confront the problem of who has the authority to shape such commemoration. *The Catastrophist* (2006), a realist satire by the American legal scholar Lawrence Douglas, explores how intellectual debates on memorial practice bespeak contradictory assumptions about who can properly mourn catastrophe. The novel's concern with the conceptual underpinnings of memorials resonates with the approach of Ivan Vladislavić, a prominent South African writer, in his segmented novel *The Exploded View* (2004). In the third of four narratives that compose this work, entitled "Curiouser," Vladislavić probes the meaning of art installations that commemorate political violence around the globe.

While very different in literary style, these two works of fiction both make concerns with comparative suffering and outsider participation an integral part of the memorial process they address. In doing so, they create an ambivalent space for the outsider to participate in the commemoration of atrocity: both by honoring the dead and, provocatively, by replicating forms of fraudulence and sacrilege in that empathetic act. While commemoration is conventionally understood as a restorative attempt, these works draw our attention to decidedly ignoble aspects of this process, such as falsified claims to genocide survivorship or theft of relics from sites of catastrophe. These acts of dishonesty, in *The Catastrophist*, seem to stem from particular assumptions about the kinds of experiences that commonly legitimate memorial practices. As long as the division between insider and outsider is constructed as incommensurable, the novel suggests, those perceived as insiders and outsiders continue to haunt each other and to serve as each other's secret sharer under the signs of deception and appropriation. Until we come to accept expanded ideas of who is able to mourn whom, commemoration across borders will continue to be haunted by the specter of an enabling violence. *The Exploded View* furthers this way of thinking about memorials, but also embraces the idea of deception as a potentially productive starting point for meaningful commemoration in a globalizing world. While *The Catastrophist* codes dishonesty as an ultimately reprehensible symptom of a larger philosophical problem, *The Exploded View* challenges the possibility of an innocent or idealized place from which to mark the meaning of suffering. These two works can be understood as new kinds of public memorial, not necessarily as the conventionally understood space of healing for survivors or witnesses, but as

works in which we are invited to understand the enabling significance of sacrilegious as well as sacral impulses that commemorate the dead. It is through this unsettling confrontation, these metamemorial fictions suggest, that we may approach a form of commemoration befitting a world where atrocities and their dark legacies are increasingly globalized.

ON THE GLOBALIZATION OF MEMORIAL PRACTICE

If the atrocities committed worldwide in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are unique in their magnitude, they are also uniquely the product of a world increasingly interconnected through economic, political and social networks. As these links have intensified in the 1990s and 2000s, efforts to address atrocity have become part of larger patterns of reflection and debate across many parts of the world. Such works of fiction as *The Catastrophist* and *The Exploded View* thus emerge in an era of increasing concern about the impact of globalization on the legacy of mass violence. They appear in an age when “here” and “there,” “then” and “now,” can no longer be firmly distinguished, an age when nations struggle to exercise full sovereignty over the events that occur within and across their borders. Perhaps more so than at any other point in time, crimes committed in one place haunt surprisingly distant locales and compel the hard work of memorial making across the globe.

To be sure, many, and perhaps most, memorials continue to be deeply local and historically specific. Many are explicitly national, tied to the formation of new state power and used to articulate new national aspirations.⁴ Decisions to designate annual days of mourning or anniversary celebrations of new governance, as Elizabeth Jelin shows, reveal a close connection between the nation and its symbolic markers.⁵ Many physical memorials, such as the Robben Island Museum in South Africa or the museum at the Navy Mechanics’ School in Argentina, insist upon the importance of confronting actual sites where mass abuse took place. The importance of uniquely local initiatives, therefore, should not be understated.

Yet these local responses are not the only forms of memorial to emerge in the chaotic beginning of the new millennium.⁶ Omnibus memorials, which mark generalities such as atrocity, war or torture; comparative memorials, which bring specific catastrophes into dialogue with

one another; and memorials to atrocities that occurred primarily on distant soil are all on the rise in different parts of the world.⁷ With such globalized memorial practices comes anxiety about ownership of, and responsibility for, the events of the past.

Indeed, part of the problem lies in the very concept of “public memorial,” which relies on the slippage between the concept of memory and the concept of history. “Memory,” in its simplest vernacular form, tends to imply a direct remembered relationship to experience; “history” tends to imply events of collective significance that can be learned about rather than only personally experienced.⁸ Yet, of course, these concepts can never be so neatly confined. Events that seem to connote a particular urgency in the present are often described through the language of memory, even when individuals may have no personal experiential memories of those events. The language of memory (as in “cultural memory”) is also strongly associated with specific groups that police their boundaries, such as ethnicities, races or nationalities.⁹ Encouraging individuals to think of themselves as “remembering” rather than as “learning about” a particular past, Walter Benn Michaels contends, relies on a form of essentialism that determines in advance which kinds of people are supposed to remember an experience of catastrophe they did not actually experience firsthand. The Holocaust, thus, is “remembered” by Jews in a way that is said to create their sense of Jewishness, but it only produces such a sense of Jewishness in individuals who could already plausibly be considered Jews. Michaels argues that the practice of remembering the public past feels vitally important but is caught up in contradiction, while the practice of learning the history of others makes sense logically but cannot shape one’s identity in a meaningful way. The consequence of this argument, he contends, is—or should be—“a diminished interest in history.”¹⁰ The public memorial, in Michaels’s reading, could coherently serve the needs of no one beyond actual experiential survivors of violence.

Yet is this necessarily the case? I suggest that this impasse marks the place where the memorial practices of outsiders stand to intervene: they offer the possibility of recalibrating the relationship between “remembering” and “learning about” and therefore call into question the strong separation implied by Michaels’s argument. What one remembers—what happened to one—is never fully divorced from what one learns; indeed, it is learned knowledge, or history, that helps to make a personal memory

legible in the first place.¹¹ This argument finds articulation in the work of Satya Mohanty, who describes the power of personal experience as inhering precisely in its links to larger knowledge about the world. “‘Personal experience’ is socially and ‘theoretically’ constructed,” Mohanty contends. “Our access to our remotest personal feelings is dependent upon social narratives, paradigms, and even ideologies.”¹² Elizabeth Jelin extends this line of thought with reference to traumatic memory, arguing that “analytically, this paves the way to a reconceptualization of what in common sense is understood as ‘transmission,’ namely the process through which a shared cultural understanding linked to a given vision of the past is constructed.”¹³ Individual memories are interpreted as part of larger patterns, which is what makes it possible for individuals to say they survived a genocide rather than to say they survived a specific attack on their lives. The knowledge of other people dying, in short, is a crucial part of what such survivors can be said to remember.

I seek to take the implications of Mohanty and Jelin’s argument to the next step, where this “shared understanding” may work across as well as within particular communities.¹⁴ In arguing for the conceptual entanglement between remembering and learning, or between memory and history, I wish to be clear that I am not seeking to render the distinction between insider and outsider experience irrelevant. Knowing that others have died as one might soon die holds a very different power than knowing that others have died in another part of the world. Perhaps more than any other kind of experience, memories of atrocity demand respect and differentiation. The suffering of the tortured should never be equated with the suffering of the torturer, the suffering of the witness or the suffering of the one who hears of terrible events that came to pass. However, acknowledging a degree of conceptual blurring between memory and history, or between remembering and learning, does allow for a way out of the double bind that Michaels identifies. This implication allows one’s personal experience of safety or distance to be reconfigured: by learning about what happened to victims of a genocide, an individual far removed from the physical site of violence might come to appreciate the role his or her community played in accentuating or diminishing the atrocity.¹⁵ Thinking in this way can help to restore an urgency to learning about the lives of others, an urgency that bears both upon responsibilities to others and upon the forging of one’s identity. This work emerges in the space

between memory and history, a space I will describe through the language of commemoration. Such an endeavor always entails resignification, inevitably changing our understanding of the past in the act of reflecting on our often vexed relationship to it. Neither demanding the intimate experience implied by memory, nor assuming the distanced formality suggested by history, commemoration signifies a space in which we can address the legacy of the past while recognizing how deeply entangled remembering and learning must necessarily be. Commemoration, in other words, is always already a border-crossing endeavor.

While not always conventionally associated with imaginative writing, commemoration finds one important home in the genre I call metame-morial fiction, or fiction that compels us to reflect on the act of forging public memorials. Through such fiction, we are invited not only to honor the dead and the suffering but also to contemplate the cultural logic that enables or blocks the very possibility of mourning them. The role of this kind of fiction is thus distinctly different from other genres of writing that document atrocity and its aftermath (though metame-morial fiction may also serve a testimonial purpose). By exposing, in often disturbing and provocative ways, the assumptions about insiders and outsiders that go into the making of memorials across borders, metame-morial fiction offers a new contribution to the difficult work of mourning atrocity in an age of globalization. It is to such a contribution that I now turn.

IMAGINING CATASTROPHE

Lawrence Douglas brings to the writing of fiction his expertise as a law professor at an American liberal arts college, where his writing and teaching have long explored the social consequences of the law. In his study of Holocaust trials, *The Memory of Judgment* (2001), Douglas argues for a renewed understanding of the meaning of show trials. While the term “show trial” has become, following Hannah Arendt, a contemptuous synonym for justice gone awry, Douglas contends that trials can operate powerfully as pedagogical spectacles while still maintaining fidelity to the principles of the law. Trials, in Douglas’s account, can serve effectively—if not unconditionally—as public memorials that encourage broad extralegal reflection on the legacy of mass violence.¹⁶ *The Memory of Judgment* can

be read not only as a recuperation of the often maligned Nuremberg, Eichmann and Barbie trials but also as a theory of the memorial as that which is performative, dynamic and even contradictory.

These ideas deeply inform *The Catastrophist*, a dark satire of academic life that places debates on commemorating atrocity within the richly detailed world of the realist novel.¹⁷ If a classic principle of realism holds that ideas can never be articulated in isolation and are always entangled with the private needs and desires of their holders, Douglas invites his readers to consider the matrix of the personal that formal academic studies often erase from sight. Set in a small New England college, *The Catastrophist* concerns the rise and fall of an American art historian, Daniel Wellington, who specializes in war memorials. Though his book, *Art after Atrocity*, establishes him as a public intellectual and leads to a prestigious place on a commission to build a Holocaust memorial in Berlin,¹⁸ Daniel ultimately destroys this measure of professional success by falsely claiming to be the child of Holocaust survivors and by propositioning a former student. The novel's twinned plots of personal and professional self-destruction make good on the novel's title, proving Daniel a catastrophist both in his intellectual preoccupations and in his most intimate choices. It is within this context that the novel invites its readers to consider debates on the best way to address the past and on who has the proper authority to do so.

The problem of commemoration in the age of globalization appears most keenly in the tensions that characterize Daniel's thought on this practice. When he is invited to speak on a panel in Berlin, he finds himself drawn to the site for the city's proposed Holocaust memorial. Gazing out at a dismal landscape full of trash and weeds, imagining the dozens of proposals for the site, Daniel spots a single Yahrzeit (memorial) candle lying in the debris. The holder is engraved with an inscription to a child who died in Auschwitz.

I was struck by the conviction that the single Yahrzeit candle for Moses Wechsler was the only authentic memorial to the Shoah. The site had to remain in its present state: an empty garbage-strewn lot, host to a single extinguished candle laid to the memory of a long-dead child. I would scrap my prepared speech, and instead would defend the radical simplicity of the neglected wasteland.(85–86)

In this moment, Daniel seeks to defend the countermemorial tradition that he describes, earlier in the novel, as an emerging populist alternative to massive, state-sanctioned and heroic war monuments. With its moving singularity, the candle evokes a view of commemoration that remains close to the actual experiential losses of local residents. The Yahrzeit candle bespeaks the Holocaust as the destruction of actual persons, rather than as the destruction of Jewish culture; its very resistance to generalization makes it, in Daniel's eyes, the most honest form of honoring the dead.

The candle further suggests to Daniel a memorial made by, and designed for, local residents rather than one by and for visitors. Daniel is dismayed by the idea of a grandiose memorial that would attract tourists, finding its only honest effect in the modernist alienation he presumes local residents would experience in the presence of such public art. "I tried to imagine the melancholic acreage transformed into a sprawling memorial, a space to which tourists, but not Berliners, would flock," he thinks. "It seemed somehow fitting that carved into the heart of the city would be a place where its residents would feel like trespassers" (84). Against the projected monstrosity of the "sprawling memorial," the "radical simplicity of the neglected wasteland" becomes an icon of the local and the individual against the global and the collective.

This critique of the global surges into even more explicit focus when the novel raises the problem of omnibus memorials. At the panel, Professor Kostygian, an Armenian expert on genocide, takes the opportunity to urge the Germans to build a memorial not only to their own past but also to the suffering of others. "'Shouldn't their memorial serve to remember all acts of mass killing—the genocide of my people, Stalin's purges, Pol Pot's killing fields, Milosevic's ethnic cleansing, the Rwandan frenzy?'" he asks (116). In response, Daniel offers a version of a currently powerful and widespread critique of such an impulse. "What kind of precedent would an omnibus memorial establish? Every country could erect one and so escape any reflection on its own specific history. Far from unsettling, these memorials would be smug, arrogant structures of reassurance" (118).¹⁹ Bolstering Daniel's critique, the novel suggests that Kostygian supports an omnibus memorial not only from a genuine sense of shared suffering, but also because it represents his best political chance to gain public recognition for the specific genocide of Armenians. "I must confess I resent a

little the success of you Jewish people in getting your memorials built,” he admits, using the ever-provocative “you people” (119). The omnibus memorial thus comes to hint at the political machination of a professional advocate in opposition to the heartfelt sincerity of the Yahrzeit candle. Moreover, Kostygian’s personal actions belie the inclusivity of his proposed omnibus memorial. Sharing a cab from the airport with Daniel, Kostygian strikes up a bond with the Armenian taxi driver that emphatically excludes Daniel from its purview. The novel would thus seem to support the idea of the inevitable reality of the experiential, local and private against the mystification of the globalized omnibus memorial.

Yet, if the omnibus is clearly marked as a contaminated memorial form, Daniel’s defense of the local and individual is also undercut by the details of the novel. The neglected landscape of Berlin, which he perceives as an organic part of the city, is already marked as a space penetrated by signs of the foreign, filled with “global garbage” (84). Daniel himself is now an outsider to the city, where he no longer lives and where he does not expect his future to lie. In valorizing experiences beyond the touristic, Daniel might be said to exemplify the most touristic desire of all, namely the longing for local authenticity uncontaminated by the gaze of the tourists themselves. His defense of the Yahrzeit candle emerges from this paradoxical place, in which he, the outsider, nonetheless understands himself as able to recognize and honor this intimate personal counter-monument. As long as the touristic and the authentic are constructed as antithetical, Daniel has no coherent way to defend his appraisal of effective commemoration in Berlin.

Perhaps because at some unspoken level Daniel perceives the force of this paradox, he becomes all too willing to claim a direct experiential connection to the events of the Holocaust: a connection, as it turns out, that is fraudulent. In a conversation with Kostygian, Daniel begins to imply a biographical link to the atrocities of the past. “I heard myself tell him that both my parents were survivors, too” (119). Daniel’s connection to the Holocaust is indeed an autobiographical one—most of his grandfather’s family were killed—but his grandfather had been sent to America as a child and was not personally persecuted. What Daniel does, then, is to change a story of broad affiliation into a story of direct descent. He allows himself to claim the privileges afforded to what Marianne Hirsch has powerfully described as “postmemory,” or memories of trauma passed

on by survivors to their descendants.²⁰ Without this claim to postmemory, Daniel's loose autobiographical links to trauma look suspiciously similar to the connections of those without autobiographical affiliations to the catastrophe. Daniel's intimacy with the Holocaust resides in the liminal space where direct mourning shades into omnibus commemoration. In short, Daniel is located on a border, and, due to his binary thinking, he does not know how to commemorate suffering from that liminal space. His choice, thus, is to erase the very idea of a border.

Daniel's phrasing—"I heard myself tell him"—not only suggests his desire to evade responsibility for this falsehood, but also gestures toward a splitting of his subjectivity at the very divide between insider and outsider. The passivity of this sentence construction suggests that there is no other way for Daniel to imagine himself, given the logic of memorials that he has chosen to espouse. His split begins to mirror Kostygian's in reverse: Kostygian uses the rhetoric of the globalized omnibus memorial but in his private actions continues to privilege the experiential. In the guise of breaking borders and asserting the universality of suffering, Kostygian reinforces those borders and asserts the uniqueness of suffering. Responding to Daniel's claim to be the child of survivors, Kostygian says, "Yes, I suspected as much—I could tell by the passion of your words. We may disagree, but let us never forget—we are kin of sorts" (120). Reversing (and thus reiterating) this pattern, Daniel valorizes the rhetoric of the local and experiential in his own public positioning but cannot translate this intimacy into his personal life except through misleading statements and outright lies. The potential falsity of the global, thus, finds its secret sharer in the potential falsity of the local. When these ideas take shape in the embodied context that the realist novel affords, they turn out to constitute not so much a debate as a mutual haunting.

Why is it that Kostygian cannot distinguish between the passion of a child of survivors and the passion of what Gary Weissman would call a concerned "nonwitness"?²¹ In part, this confusion might be seen as a testament to the generic forms that have come to characterize autobiographical representations of the Holocaust (forms of writing that have enabled the historical production of falsified Holocaust memoirs).²² Daniel experiences his lie as something spoken through him, as a larger cultural script that he comes to inhabit and which others in the novel enthusiastically help him construct. What Kostygian claims to recognize, in other words, may

be a form of expression once associated with experiential trauma but now irretrievably globalized, available to anyone familiar with its conventions. But Kostygian's confusion seems to hint at something deeper than his recognition of a genre at work. After all, Kostygian claims to have *already* marked Daniel as the child of survivors, well before Daniel fraudulently describes himself as one. By referring specifically not to any component of Daniel's memory or knowledge but to "the passion" of Daniel's speech, Kostygian bases his assessment on empathetic concern, not on experience or on conventions of description. In this realm of empathetic concern, multiple approaches to the past become inseparable in practice. In short, as Kostygian's response suggests, the divide between the concern of insider and outsider is rendered both irreconcilable and indistinguishable: all the more irreconcilable, perhaps, for being so indistinguishable.

If the expression of empathetic concern alone cannot separate insiders from outsiders, what is there to be lost in admitting different points of view from which such concern can arise? While Daniel's biographical claim is fraudulent (and critiqued within the novel as such, since such claims make serious ethical demands on the public sphere), nothing in the novel suggests that his actual concern for Holocaust victims and survivors is anything less than sincere. It is paradoxically that very concern for the intimate losses of survivors that leads Daniel to stake his own claim of direct descent: he fears the tradition of intimate memorial he defends will be undermined if he acknowledges his own oblique relation to trauma.²³ Yet this fear also seems to mistake the very nature of the memorial, which relies precisely on an invitation to outsiders to acknowledge and to honor the sufferings of the past. A candle in a private home, visible only to those invited to see it, performs one commemorative function; the same candle in a public space, visible to passers-by like Daniel, performs another. A public memorial, by its very nature, must always cross borders: its challenge is to create sufficient space for those constructed as insiders and as outsiders to offer a multiplicity of visible responses to the event in question. The novel suggests that as long as we operate under the assumption that outsider memorials are fraudulent, they will indeed be created as such. It is only by abandoning essentialist ideas about who can mourn whom that such memorials can forsake such violations. Without this ability to acknowledge differing legacies of atrocity, the dishonesty of not recognizing the ambiguity of the memorial leads to further and more disastrous

dishonesty. *The Catastrophist*, I suggest, commemorates genocide precisely by pressing this unsettling conclusion upon its readers.

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

The Catastrophist thus leaves us in a world where the pressures of commemorating violence across borders lead, perhaps inevitably, to different registers of new catastrophe. I turn now to a very different literary work that testifies to similar anxieties, but which turns that disquiet into the very subject of memorial practice. “Curiouser,” a short fiction by the South African writer Ivan Vladislavić, is, like *The Catastrophist*, a metamemorial meditation that invokes contentious debates about the ethics of commemorating catastrophe across borders. Fears about global responses to atrocity animate “Curiouser,” which concerns a South African artist who creates installations about violence in many parts of the world, including the Holocaust, Bosnia, Angola, Rwanda and eventually also South Africa. A second-generation white South African, Vladislavić is not only one of the most significant emerging voices in the transitional and post-apartheid period, but also a prominent freelance editor who has worked on projects dealing with human rights abuses and visual art. As the editor for Antjie Krog’s memoir *Country of My Skull* (1998), Vladislavić oversaw one of the most internationally circulated accounts of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In his work with the visual arts, he edited one book on South African painting that appeared in 2000 and developed another on the conceptual artist Willem Boshoff, published in 2005.²⁴ In sometimes visible and sometimes oblique ways, these broad interests in atrocity and art inform the preoccupations of “Curiouser.”

“Curiouser” is the third of four pieces that comprise *The Exploded View* (2004), a segmented novel that explores the changing terrain of Johannesburg after apartheid.²⁵ It features a black artist, Simeon Majara, who has made a name for himself on the postmodern art scene for installations that deal primarily with the legacy of mass violence. Simeon’s governing aesthetic is comparative and sequential, often bringing together images of violence from diverse geographical and historical locations. His installations meditate on the uneasy relationship between the “here” of the art and the “there” of the violence, offering not simply memorials to

the dead but reflections on the very process by which this commemoration takes place. His artworks are themselves inflected by the specter of an enabling fraudulence and sacrilege, suggesting the potentially (and provocatively) productive violence behind specific attempts to commemorate catastrophe from a distance.

As a story about the production and reception of memorial art, “Curiouser” deepens the tension between private and public claims to the legacy of atrocity that animates *The Catastrophist*. This tension appears perhaps most clearly in the wordplay of Simeon’s installations, which often point to the duality or ambiguity of their own frames of reference. One exhibition, titled *Skydiver I*, features a Roman numeral to indicate its place in a series. Yet the Roman numeral “I” is indistinguishable from the personal pronoun “I,” suggesting both the irreconcilability and the intimacy between the sequential and the unique, the collective and the individual. Another installation, called *Genocide III*, attests to the ethical anxieties that attend any attempt to compare atrocities. The language of genocide allows for productive comparisons across the globe, but it also threatens to devolve into a language of formulaic public internationalism in which the nuances of the private are lost or in which different historical atrocities vie for prominence.²⁶ Through these titles, the story invites us to question the moment when the I of the personal pronoun shifts into the I of the numerical sequence: in short, it asks us to inhabit the space where remembering the past and learning about it blur, the space I have been identifying as the vexed place of commemoration.

This space of commemoration is fraught with the ironically enabling specters of fraudulence and sacrilege. Two particular installations, *Bullet-in* and *Genocide III*, reveal inverted forms of deception that speak to the need to claim a sense of “really being there” when addressing violence from significant geographical distance. In *Bullet-in*, Simeon develops a series of photographs inspired by Huambo, a city that endured massacres and ongoing violence during civil war in Angola. The first photograph in the sequence, following the conventions of documentary art, offers the image of a wall scarred by bullet marks in Huambo. However, the next in the sequence troubles the idea of representational authenticity:

Those that followed were produced deliberately, with live rounds and a template, in the trouble spots of the world. According to the

official account, anyway, the one you read in the catalogue. Unofficially, they had all been made here in Greenside without a shot being fired—he was too afraid of hurting someone, and Ruth would never have allowed it. He drilled the holes in his own garden wall with a Black & Decker, and repainted the surface between photographs, patching the cracks with Polyfilla, putting together Latin American colour schemes, tatters of Middle Eastern advertising, scraps of graffiti. Waiting for the weather to turn.

His personal favorite supposedly came from the hills of KwaZulu-Natal. (122)

While viewers of the exhibition are led to believe that this art represents historical sites of violence from around the world, the impulse toward the global becomes fraudulently relocalized. In its turn to deceptive representation, Simeon's installation plays with the slippery line between the private and the public: certain elements of the artwork are available only to the artist and to his privileged confidants (including the reader), who realize that the wall in the photographs is an empathetic recreation of other parts of the world. As Gary Weissman would argue, the wall bespeaks a fantasy of witnessing that alludes to the desire of nonwitnesses to approach the catastrophes endured by others. The public audience, guided by the catalogue, perceives the very different phenomenon of art produced in actual sites of conflict. Through this move, Simeon at once replicates and inverts the conventional forms of privilege and knowledge associated with the construction of a divide between insider and outsider: what the insider sees is most clearly the empathetic fantasy of one who was *not* there, while what the outsider sees makes claims to the realism of one who *was* there.

We should, I believe, be deeply disturbed by Simeon's turn to deception in this installation. But this deception does not necessarily invalidate his work as a powerful act of commemoration. Simeon's fraudulence might be seen as both a symptom of, and a response to, the ideas of authenticity that produce a split between those constructed as insiders and those constructed as outsiders to catastrophe. While I am not arguing that there is no difference, or should be no difference, in how we understand those who experienced violence and those who did not, the lines between the two often inform one another in ways that sharp distinctions between

memory and history obscure. To acknowledge violence across borders, Simeon's work suggests, is not just to cross the national border between South Africa and Angola; it is also to investigate the conditions that make such border crossing possible. If commemoration across borders is constructed in a way that can never be anything other than fraudulent (the implication of Daniel's predicament in *The Catastrophist*), then *Bullet-in* takes fraudulence as its very condition of possibility in order to address the legacy of violence in an inevitably global context.

Crucially, this approach is associated as much with restoration as it is with destruction. In the passage quoted above, the description of Simeon's deception appears through the reconstructive language of building. The bullet holes featured in the photographs are made not by weapons but by drills; indeed, the dominant impulse behind the relocalization of the images appears to be the attempt to avoid new violence. Choosing the metaphoric injury of fraudulence over the literal harm of firing a gun, Simeon in this instance might be seen to offer a distinctly recuperative ethos through his falsification. The wordplay of the title, as with so many of Simeon's installations, gestures toward this ambiguity: is the wall the place where bullets find their way in, or is it more akin to a bulletin board, a stable place designed to support changing calls to viewers' attention? The undecidability between these two choices gestures to a place where memorials can refuse the stability and closure often associated with authenticity.

The making of *Bullet-in* further echoes and deepens the concerns raised in *The Catastrophist*. If a viewer cannot tell apart a wall scarred by bullets in the Middle East from a wall scarred by drills in a Johannesburg suburb, does it really matter? Unlike falsified memoirs, Simeon's art never purports to provide evidence for historical violence. The images are not presented as documentary photographs or as found art; indeed, the catalogue explicitly describes the images as having been made "deliberately, with live rounds and a template." If the practical effect of concern with violence toward others is the same, regardless of where the art was made, is there any pragmatic objection to the practice of representing violence across borders? The final result of Simeon's creative process, "Curiouser" reveals, is to give the fraudulent garden wall the emotional patina of an actual site of violence: "On an impulse, [Simeon] put the last of his lanterns at the foot of this wall as a private marker" (123). The place of commemorative art turns out to invite its own memorial, suggesting that

perhaps part of what we commemorate is not only literal violence but also the act of imagining such violence. The lantern by the wall offers a marker both to those who have suffered and to Simeon's imaginative attempt to honor their losses. Commemoration becomes, in short, a form of fictionalization.

If the turn to fraudulence in *Bullet-in* confuses the forms of knowledge available to insiders (Simeon and his readers) and to outsiders (fictional South African viewers of the art installation), Simeon's installation *Genocide III* inverts this pattern to produce an even more haunting effect. An exhibit on mass killings in Rwanda, *Genocide III* forms the third in a series that deals with atrocities in the Holocaust and in Bosnia (we are left to surmise that these previous exhibits may be titled *Genocide I* and *Genocide II*). The story registers the pressure of who can legitimately commemorate whom, revealing the extent to which this legitimacy is racially constructed. In the story, black artists like Simeon confront the expectation that their work should focus specifically on atrocities that affect black Africans, lending a new valence to Simeon's sequence that combines Rwanda with the Holocaust and Bosnia. Given that Simeon is the imaginative construction of a white South African writer, the story thus continues to complicate the question of who is allowed to commemorate whom. While many valorize the work of insiders and look skeptically at the representations of outsiders, "Curiouser" questions these assumptions at work.²⁷ Is Simeon the transgressor with his pieces about the Holocaust and Bosnia, or is it Vladislavić, partly of German and Croatian descent, the one who transgresses in representing memorials to genocide in Rwanda? Is it one's ancestral relationship or one's imaginative relation to the past that should matter most? Through its metamemorial and metafictional dimensions, Vladislavić's writing suggests the degree to which the two are always intimately intermingled. When dealing with groups of people who did not themselves directly witness or experience atrocity, it becomes difficult to clearly construct insiders and outsiders.

Like the reliance on fraud found in *Bullet-in*, *Genocide III* depends upon a disturbing turn to theft and deception for both its production and its reception. Simeon travels to a historical site of atrocity in Nyanza as part of the preparation for his piece, suggesting the inverse of the process that allowed him to create *Bullet-in*. In Rwanda, it becomes important to Simeon that he find an actual historical element that can sustain his work

of commemoration. He finds this element in a set of bandages hidden in an abandoned hospital, which he secretly removes from the site and carries back with him to South Africa. While Simeon does not admit of this action as theft, even to himself, he nonetheless approaches his task with a surreptitious secrecy that betrays his unspoken sense that to take the bandages represents a form of sacrilege. The bandages have been abandoned by Rwandans and left to be part of the commemorative site, despite the deep pragmatic need for medical supplies in the country; both literally and metaphorically, Simeon could be seen to be stealing from Rwanda resources it needs to heal its fragmented communities.²⁸ While Simeon hopes to differentiate himself from his fellow travelers who visit Nyanza as part of a ghoulishly commodified form of genocide tourism, his appropriation of the bandages hints at his own potentially criminalized approach to the site of atrocity. The larger implication of the story seems to suggest that border crossings are haunted by the specter of such intimate violation. Simeon is acting out a larger cultural script that constructs such outsider commemoration as a form of theft through appropriation.

The logic informing Simeon's discovery and theft continues to haunt the design of his installation. Eventually, Simeon weaves those bandages into a series of ghostly hanging shrouds that form a crucial part of his exhibition. This action suggests the importance to Simeon, in this case, of showing something in the exhibition that actually came from the site of the massacre and bore mute witness to the atrocities committed there. Yet *Genocide III* reverses the practice of *Bullet-in*: in the finished installation, Simeon makes no reference to the Rwandan bandages and cuts the video of his discovery from the footage shown in the exhibition. This practice might be considered a literal version of the logic of appropriation: the sign of the real is first stolen across borders, then virtually erased to all but the artist. It is the metamemorial fiction, not the memorial art it represents, that makes this uneasy but enabling deception visible to the reading public.

Yet Simeon's art, despite—or, we might say, *because of*—its disturbing border crossing, does offer an important image of how art can contribute to commemorative ideals. It does so by encouraging its viewers to oscillate between looking *at* the spectacle of violence and looking *through* the forms of its suffering. This distinction informs the architecture of the exhibition, which is divided into two separate parts. In the first room of Simeon's exhibit, the emphasis remains on the modern technologies that threaten

to turn violence into overwhelming visual spectacle. The installation features large television screens that replay footage from the aftermath of the violence, confronting the viewer with graphic images of dead bodies and fleeing international peacekeepers. The challenge, for viewers, is to find an escape from this chaos: quite literally, to reach the second part of the exhibition, they must walk through a slit in a fabric screen onto which these images are projected. However, only those who have seen the exhibition catalogue know to look for such an unorthodox exit from this part of the installation. Again reversing the relationship between art and text seen in *Bullet-in*, where the catalogue purposefully misguides its readers, *Genocide III* rewards only those who have relied on the catalogue to direct them through the installation. This audience finds itself “stranded on the wrong side of the stage curtains, beating at the fabric, until an arm plunged through the gap, and then the whole body slipped gratefully into the image, swallowed up in it” (117). This surrender promises an alternative to the quasi-voyeurism of looking directly at violence, leading instead to a space of ethically weighted contemplation of the dead.

The promise of Simeon’s exhibition—the hope of a world beyond, where an audience can confront the past legacy of violence and honor suffering—takes its viewers into a room filled with ghostly hanging shrouds. These pieces “bore the impression of a human body, a crying mouth, a twisted arm, a hand raised to ward off a blow. The long white sheets were hung in a dimly lit room like photographs of ghosts” (112–13). Since the eerie shrouds evoke the absence of bodies, they offer an important alternative to explicit representations of violent content. While watching the television footage registers an endless feedback loop of atrocity, the shrouds invite viewers to inhabit the site of violation itself. As these viewers come to see themselves figured in the shape of victims of violence, they gain the possibility of a shared sense of human vulnerability.²⁹ These shrouds gesture toward what Debjani Ganguly has described as “a move towards an *actualisation* of a moral universal built on ‘crime against humanity’, where the interlocutor of the victim is a ‘stranger’ and not her/his kith and kin.”³⁰ The “ghosts” that Simeon evokes are, to the visible eye, conspicuously denuded of signs of particular identity that would encourage a strong division between those constructed as insiders and those constructed as outsiders. But the presence of the stolen bandages in these shrouds, visible only to Simeon and to the readers of “Curiouser,”

also challenges the very idea that such memorials might be made from the standpoint of innocence.

If we take these two strands together—the story of the production of a work of art and the story of its reception—we can see that the potentially moving and empathetic experience of the viewer relies on the literally deceptive way that the art is made: the theft of the bandages from the site of the massacre and the concealment of this theft in the making of the installation. This doubleness seems to embody the constitutive contradiction of memorial art made in the age of globalization. Though the deception of the piece does and should disturb us, the story does not encourage us to dismiss this practice as an invalid approach to commemoration. Instead, this fraudulence becomes the provocative condition of possibility for marking catastrophe across borders. In the vision Vladislavić offers, there is no uncontaminated position from which to recognize suffering at a distance.

As Vladislavić's story offers us these portraits of art, along with “exploded views” of how they are constructed, it suggests how the contribution of fiction to commemoration can be a doubled and paradoxical one. It may be performative, seeking meaningful ways to engage with the aftermath of atrocity, but it may also be critically reflective, exposing the compromised patterns that make such performance possible in the first place. It is this doubled optic, this stereoscopic portrait of what art is and what it can do in the world, that makes Vladislavić's work so haunting. His fiction does not just ask us to think about the violence committed in Rwanda or Bosnia or South Africa. Perhaps almost as urgently, it asks us to consider the new kind of generative violence within attempts to mourn the lives of others in a globalizing world.

CONCLUSION

Although these works of fiction do not necessarily imply that all commemoration from a distance is inherently dishonest, they do suggest that the current logic about ownership of trauma may pressure it to become so. *The Catastrophist* and “Curiouser” lead us to believe that as long as we remain within this logic, acknowledging violence across borders cannot but be enabled by a deceptive or sacrilegious impulse. For *The Catastrophist*, this deception is one best eliminated, while “Curiouser” embraces this

paradox as the condition of possibility for an art that productively troubles our desire for a standpoint of innocence. If, as Marita Sturken has argued, the claiming of innocence in acts of commemoration frequently masks a desire to evade political responsibility,³¹ then the turn to fraudulence in “Curiouser” might offer a perverse form of ethical gesture that refuses the familiar narrative of the therapeutic role of art in an age of violence. Fraudulence, in these circumstances, becomes the dark double rather than the opposite of true mourning.

Fiction may not always itself serve as a traditional memorial space dedicated to the sacred honoring of those who suffer, but it may provide a place capable of reflecting on the very debates through which memorials to the past take shape. To commemorate is not the same as to remember: commemoration need not be imagined as the competitor to traumatic memories of those who have endured atrocities. Though commemoration will (and should) seek to learn from such memories, it offers a space where we might consider the work of imaginative fantasy as a form of concerted empathy. The implications of these fictions take us in two competing directions: toward a greater acknowledgment of the fraudulence that paradoxically enables true concern for others, and toward a way of thinking that recognizes that passionate concern for the suffering of others is not the sole provenance of those intimately affected by such suffering.

Both of these possible directions speak to pressing issues within larger questions of the globalization of atrocity and its aftermath. Attention to enabling violence, even of the most metaphorical sort, may help to add a new dimension to the fraudulence Jon Elster perceives in the very heart of political and legal attempts to imagine new forms of justice after catastrophe: such ventures are “haunted by hypocrisy and by the transmutation of base motives into nobler ones,” he argues.³² As the base and the noble become almost indistinguishable in Daniel’s and Simeon’s approaches to the past, these metamemorial fictions allow us the chance to think through the vexed assumptions that underlie the commemoration of human rights abuses.

NOTES

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1. Magdalena Zolkos, "The Time That Was Broken, the Home That Was Razed: Deconstructing Slavenka Drakulić's Storytelling about Yugoslav War Crimes," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2, no. 2 (July 2008): 214.

2. Known as *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience*, this initiative began in 2004 to sponsor writing workshops for military veterans and to publish anthologies of their writings.

3. The problem of outsider concern animates the works of such scholars as Luc Boltanski and Gary Weissman, who approach this question from different angles. Boltanski's work concentrates on the politics of pity and on the role of media representations in fostering such politics, leading him to theorize a form of "distant suffering" that combines reports of atrocity with accounts of how bearing witness to atrocity affects the reporter. See Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Gary Weissman interrogates the reasons why individuals who did not experience atrocity might desire intimacy with catastrophe, illuminating the significance of their complex desire to understand such experiences. See Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

4. See, for example, Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Annie E. Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

5. Elizabeth Jelin, "Public Memorialization in Perspective: Truth, Justice and Memory of Past Repression in the Southern Cone of South America," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, no. 1 (March 2007): 138–56.

6. Although I suggest an intensification of interest in globalized memorials during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, such border-crossing impulses are by no means limited to this historical period. For example, Ofer Askhenazi, in "The Incredible Transformation of Dr. Bessel: Alternative Memories of the Great War in German War Films of the Late 1920s," *History & Memory*

20, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 121–52, argues for the transnational imagined communities constructed in Weimar cinema. Nor do the national and the transnational constitute mutually exclusive forms of identification, as Tom Lawson argues in his study of England during the Great War, “‘The Free-Masonry of Sorrow’? English National Identities and the Memorialization of the Great War in Britain, 1919–1931,” *ibid.*, 89–120.

7. One example of an omnibus memorial can be found in Pacem in Terris, an American sanctuary created by the Dutch-born artist Frederick Franck in rural New York, which features dramatic sculptures that draw attention to the nature of collective suffering. “Nail Tree,” a post riven with nails, is accompanied by a sign that reads “Every nail driven into this tree of life stands for 10,000 ... fellow humans who, in my lifetime and yours, have been tortured, murdered, gassed.” Susan Hodara, “Pacem in Terris: A Retreat Dedicated to Peace and Art,” *New York Times*, July 7, 2006 (available at <http://travel2.nytimes.com/2006/07/07/travel/escapes/07trip.html?scp=1&sq=pacem%20in%20terris%20susan%20hodara&st=cse#>, accessed July 20, 2010). A memorial attempt with a comparative dimension is exemplified by the work of St. Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, a faith-based nonprofit organization located in London. In 1993, the small medieval church of St. Ethelburga’s was destroyed by an Irish Republican Army attack on London’s financial district. It was rebuilt as a center designed to promote ideals of reconciliation, sponsoring a wide range of dialogues on conflict resolution. The Centre does not focus exclusively on the IRA or even on violence in Britain; instead, through its diverse programs, it draws attention to conflict in many different parts of the world. Finally, one memorial that addresses violence that primarily occurred on distant soil is, famously, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The museum has inspired its share of controversy, especially because it was constructed in a space close to the nation’s capital before the National Museum of the American Indian, which addresses (among many other forms of history) genocide committed on American soil.

8. For a more extensive look at the changing historical relationship between these terms, see Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations*, no. 69 (Winter 2000): 127–50.

9. For instance, Julia Epstein and Lori Hope Lefkowitz argue that “cultural memory refers to ethnic group consciousness of the past and provides the philosophical and historical foundations for ethnic, religious, and racial identities.” Julia Epstein and Lori Hope Lefkowitz, “Introduction: Shaping Losses, Cultural Memory, and the Holocaust,” in *idem*, eds., *Shaping Losses: Cultural Memory and the Holocaust* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 1.

10. Walter Benn Michaels, “‘You Who Never Was There’: Slavery and the New Historicism—Deconstruction and the Holocaust,” in Hilene Flanzbaum, ed., *The*

Americanization of the Holocaust (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 251n.16.

11. Thinking of memory and history in these terms may help to avoid the problem that Kerwin Lee Klein identifies in contemporary scholarship on the subject, in which he claims that scholars habitually begin their projects by declaring the interconnections between memory and history but continue to use the terms in antithetical ways throughout their analysis. See Klein, “Emergence,” 128.

12. Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 206, 208. Mohanty’s argument in this passage draws upon the work of Naomi Scheman.

13. Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, trans. Judy Rein and Marcial Godoy-Anativia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 24.

14. I offer a broader discussion of the intimacy between what we know from experience and what we learn from others in Shameem Black, *Fiction across Borders: Imagining the Lives of Others in Late Twentieth-Century Novels* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 35–37.

15. This relationship differs from the traditional injunction to bear witness to the testimony of survivors, described in Irene Kacandes’ discussion of the epigraph to Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz* (1947). “Levi’s poem thematizes testimony; not only must the survivors tell, they must also be heard, their story repeated,” Kacandes writes. I suggest that the work of the memorial, however, is not the same as the act of repetition; memorializing necessarily involves a process of resignification or transformation, even if based closely on the testimony of those who have survived atrocity. Irene Kacandes, “‘You Who Live Safe in Your Warm Houses’: Your Role in the Production of Holocaust Testimony,” in Dagmar C.G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 189.

16. Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

17. Lawrence Douglas, *The Catastrophist* (New York: Other Press, 2006). (References to this book will appear in the text.)

18. Daniel’s fictional role as an art historian on this panel resembles the historical role of the American art historian James Young, who served as “the only foreigner and Jew” on the (actual) commission to choose a design for what was known as Germany’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Indeed, some of Daniel’s opinions (such as his desire to reject any “final solution” to the problem of memorializing the Jews) resonate closely with Young’s own views at the time,

recorded in his account of his experience on the commission. Like Daniel, Young reports “discard[ing] my carefully prepared lecture” at a heated public colloquium designed to discuss the memorial; like Daniel, he expresses his skepticism about the nature of a single centralized memorial to the Jews in Berlin. See James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 184, 191, 193, 194.

19. Ironically, it is traditionally the Holocaust that is accused of obscuring the histories of atrocity in other parts of the world, as Neil Levi's discussion of screen memory shows. See Neil Levi, “‘No Sensible Comparison’? The Place of the Holocaust in Australia's History Wars,” *History & Memory* 19, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2007): 125–26.

20. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22. Daniel's attempt resembles the latent promise that Gary Weissman identifies in Hirsch's theorization of post-memory: “[Hirsch] offers nonwitnesses a closeness to the Holocaust modeled on the second generation's relation to the event.” Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*, 18.

21. Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*, 5.

22. On this point, see Amy Hungerford, *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature, and Personification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 98–99; Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*, 215.

23. As Amy Hungerford has shown, many contemporary attempts to commemorate the Holocaust invite their audiences (Jewish and non-Jewish) not simply to learn about the Holocaust but to identify with its victims or heroes through the language of ancestry or descent. “While lists at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum can, with the help of identity cards, provide the visitor with ‘ancestors’ who experienced the Holocaust,” Hungerford argues, “Steven Spielberg's film version of the novel *Schindler's List* takes the technology of the list and runs it backwards in time, providing not Jewish ancestors but Jewish descendants for a non-Jewish moral hero.” Hungerford, *Holocaust of Texts*, 83.

24. See Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998); Cyril Coetzee, *T'kama-Adamastor: Inventions of Africa in a South African Painting*, ed. Ivan Vladislavić (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2000); Ivan Vladislavić, *Willem Boshoff* (Johannesburg: David Knut Publishing, 2005).

25. Ivan Vladislavić, “Curiouser,” in *The Exploded View* (Johannesburg: Random House, 2004), 99–155. (References to this book will appear in the text.)

26. For instance, Gregory Jay addresses the ways in which black and Jewish communities in an American context use Holocaust discourse, arguing that this common rhetoric both enables and inhibits empathetic understanding of differ-

ent historical atrocities. See Gregory Jay, "Other People's Holocausts: Trauma, Empathy, and Justice in Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*," *Contemporary Literature* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 119–49.

27. This approach to representations of trauma marks studies such as E. Ann Kaplan's, which critiques the constricting representations of Indigenous trauma in the work of non-Indigenous filmmakers and valorizes the telling of such trauma in the work of Indigenous artists. See E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 101–21, esp. 102.

28. I am grateful to Andrew McCann and Rebecca Saunders for their questions and comments on this point.

29. This shared sense might be understood in light of Dominick LaCapra's theory of "empathic unsettlement." See Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 40.

30. Debjani Ganguly, "100 Days in Rwanda, 1994: Trauma Aesthetics and Humanist Ethics in an Age of Terror," *Humanities Research* 15, no. 2 (2007): 54 (original emphasis).

31. Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 13.

32. Jon Elster, "Emotions and Transitional Justice," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 86, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 37.